



The City of New York
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**DOI ARRESTS CONSTRUCTION PROJECT MANAGER AT CITY DEPARTMENT OF SANITATION
ON CHARGES OF SUBMITTING PHONY COLLEGE DEGREE**

ROSE GILL HEARN, Commissioner of the Department of Investigation ("DOI"), announced today the arrest of an Administrative Construction Project Manager with the City Department of Sanitation ("DSNY") on charges of submitting a fraudulent Bachelor of Science degree in Engineering supposedly from the University of Miami, Coral Gables, FL, to obtain his position with DSNY. DOI began investigating after the purported degree was submitted to DOI's Background Investigation Unit as part of a required background investigation. The office of New York County District Attorney Cyrus R. Vance, Jr., is prosecuting the case.

DOI Commissioner Rose Gill Hearn said, "Using a fake academic degree to land a high-paying City job is a foolish, career-killing move and, more seriously, a crime. It's simply unfathomable that a seemingly experienced professional would imagine that the kind of deception charged here would go unnoticed."

BERNARD FERACA, 57, of Bronxville, N.Y., was charged today with Criminal Possession of a Forged Instrument in the Second Degree, a class D felony, and three counts of Offering a False Instrument for Filing in the First Degree, class E felonies. Upon conviction, a class D felony is punishable by up to seven years in prison and a class E by up to four years in prison.

FERACA has been employed with DSNY since February 2010, is assigned to the Engineering Support Services unit, and receives an annual salary of approximately \$127,932. He has been suspended without pay.

As part of the application process, FERACA had to undergo a background investigation with DOI, which included verification of his college diploma. DOI conducts approximately 2,000 background investigations of new City employees or those promoted to management positions on an annual basis. Those subject to background investigations include all appointees to managerial positions, individuals earning more than \$80,000 annually, all individuals directly involved in City contracts and individuals who work on the City's sensitive computer programs.

According to the criminal complaint, a requirement of the Administrative Construction Project Manager position at DSNY is a Bachelor's Degree in Engineering. DOI's investigation found that on January 22, 2010, the defendant submitted to DSNY a photocopy of his purported Bachelor of Science Degree in Civil Engineering from the University of Miami in Coral Gables, Florida, supposedly issued on May 8, 1977, and the defendant signed a form stating he attended the university from September 1972 to June 1977, completed 129 credits, and graduated in June 1977 with a Bachelor of Science Degree in Civil Engineering. The investigation also found that FERACA submitted to DOI as part of a Background Investigation Questionnaire a résumé that stated he received a Bachelor of Science Degree in Civil Engineering from the University of Miami; signed the questionnaire stating he attended the university between September 1972 and May 1977 and was awarded a degree in May 1977. The investigation found that the university had no record of the defendant's attendance or graduation; that the photocopied document purporting to be the defendant's degree was not a copy of an authentic diploma issued by the university; and that the individuals who purportedly had signed the diploma as President and Dean of Engineering never served in those positions at the university.

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In 2007, DOI issued a report regarding the submission of bogus degrees in the New York City Fire Department (“FDNY”) that were linked to a fraudulent diploma mill. DOI’s investigation resulted in, among other outcomes, 14 disciplinary actions and improved verification procedures at the FDNY that later led the FDNY to identify and refer to DOI other bogus educational degree submissions. That referral resulted in six arrests in October 2007 on charges of submitting phony educational degrees. DOI’s report can be found on DOI’s homepage at the following link: <http://www.nyc.gov/html/doi/html/home/home.shtml>.

Commissioner Gill Hearn thanked New York County District Attorney Cyrus R. Vance Jr., DSNY Commissioner John J. Doherty, and the Registrar’s Office of the University of Miami, and their staffs, for their assistance in this case.

Assistant District Attorney Peter Rienzi of the New York County District Attorney’s Office has been assigned to the prosecution of this case.

This investigation was conducted by DOI’s Background Investigation Unit and DOI’s Office of Inspector General for DSNY.

A criminal complaint is an accusation. A defendant is presumed innocent until proven guilty.

DOI is one of the oldest law-enforcement agencies in the country. The agency investigates and refers for prosecution City employees and contractors engaged in corrupt or fraudulent activities or unethical conduct. Investigations may involve any agency, officer, elected official or employee of the City, as well as those who do business with or receive benefits from the City.

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